Year after year the bears bring a crew of their best swimmers down into our pool for a long season of training, meets, and large competitions. This year we have some veterans that returned wanting

**Don Mills Swim Team 2011**

The team started up all the way back in late November and just ended with the OFSAA championships on March 1st. A lot happened in those three and a half months. Three times a week we were up bright and early to show up for practice. We would be in the pool at 7:00am awaiting the workout that would have us fighting to stay awake during class the rest of the day. Being a member of the swim team, I can remember the first practice that we held. We swam for about an hour and when I got out of the pool I couldn’t lift my arms beyond shoulder height they were so sore.

I never thought of swimming as something I would be in a competition for. I thought it was a thing for leisure and fun. I realized very quickly that swimming competitively was something that you had to train extremely hard for. The swim workouts were unlike anything I had ever done before. It works muscles throughout your entire body and the thing that is most different about it is that you aren’t breathing most of the time. In fact, you try to breathe as little as possible so you can swim faster. Another thing about swimming is that it is an *individual* sport. Just like in track and field, cross country, singles tennis, etc; the work you put into your training is what determines how well you do. There aren’t people you can lie back on if you are having a bad day. Your teammates can’t cause you to have a bad race. It is truly all up to you. If you are diligent in your training and do the workouts your coaches tell you to do, you should do pretty well. If you decide to skip laps every day then you might suffer the consequences. If you go beyond what the coaches tell you to do and you practice even more on your own, then you have the chance to do very well in competition.

Competitions are very important parts of the swim season. The first couple of meets you go to are very small and have 2-3 schools participating in them. These small meets can serve as progress reports for how you are improving in all of your strokes. If every small meet, your times for all events are decreasing, then you know that your work is paying off. All of the small meets combined with the training we do is what leads us up to the big meets; the regionals, and then cities and OFSAA if we qualify. These meets are when we show how good we are compared to everyone else our age. They are the reason why we trained so hard the whole season.

On Feb 7th, 2011 the Don Mills team headed off to the regional finals at the Etobicoke Olympium. The Olympium is probably the biggest swimming facility in the GTA as well as the most recognized. There were hundreds and hundreds of athletes packed in the stands all waiting and preparing to compete in their events. It was a little bit nerve-racking for all of us to see our competitors. The whole team did very well overall in the regional events. There were many top 3 finishes in events and about 12 people qualified for the city championships. Some of the best finishes include Vivian Li who won all of her events including; 100m free, 200m free, 50m butterfly. Katie Bozek finished 2nd in the 100m breaststroke and Yuting Shen also finished second in her 100m backstroke. The girls’ 4 x 50m free relay finished first, the junior boys finished second in the same event. The junior and senior girls’ medley relay teams both finished in the top three. Overall the Don Mills team did extremely well in the clutch.

The city championships had about 12 swimmers from Don Mills left in the mix. We had about two weeks of practice for the events we qualified for. The city championships were also held at the Olympium and this time it was only the best of the swimmers in Toronto that were there. Many of our swimmers improved their times from regionals and we did pretty well overall. Sadly only one of our teammates made OFSAA (Vivian Li) but even making it to the cities is quite an accomplishment given that it means we are one of the top swimmers in Toronto.

Our whole team had a very successful and exciting year and I speak on behalf of everyone when I say that we owe a big thank-you to our extremely dedicated coaches. Ms. Macleod, Mr. Williams, and our lifeguard Janet dedicated a lot of their time to our practices and just in general towards the team. They were a huge factor in our very successful season. They were there every practice helping us improve all of our strokes and our overall skills as swimmers. On behalf of the whole team we would like to give a huge thank-you to all of our coaches for a great season. All the work you put us through was painful but worth it in the end.

- **Austin O’Boyle**\_ *Don Mills Sports Collumnist*